



# MILWAUKEE COUNTY TOTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

BROUGHT TO YOU BY RISK MANAGEMENT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH WELLNESS



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## WORKPLACE ERGONOMICS



### INTRODUCTION

What is ergonomics and how does it impact us in the office? Ergonomics is the study of the relationship between people, their work and their environments. The goal of an ergonomic assessment of your workstation is to help the body move in natural ways and reduce stressors that might cause damage and pain.

### CAUSES OF MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS

The most common ergonomic pains result from strains on the neck, low back, shoulders, elbows, wrists, hands and eyes. Injuries generally occur due to one or more four primary risk factors: awkward postures, using excessive force, repetitive motion or contact stress. In addition, the way you lift and move your body can contribute to various disorders.

### BE FLEXIBLE

Even when your work does not require great physical exertion, moving the body repeatedly in ways that it is not ready to move or using muscle groups that haven't been warmed up for work is a common cause of pain. There is real value in practicing some basic stretching exercises to prepare our bodies for work.

Performing simple stretching exercises throughout the day for hands, wrists, back and neck can help avoid problems. Hands and wrists should be stretched so they are ready to perform the typical tasks required at work, especially typing. Your neck can be stretched gently from side to side and

then from front to back. Your back can be stretched while sitting in a chair by bending your chin toward your knees.

### PROPER COMPUTER POSITION

One of the biggest ergonomic risk factors is the use of computers at work. Improper positioning of the computer or workstation can cause various disorders, but those problems can be avoided by following a few simple guidelines. This diagram shows the proper computer position, which reduces the stressors that cause varied disorders.

When using a computer, remember some basic rules:

**Rule #1:** Keep your neck in an upright position so the screen is at or is slightly below eye level.

**Rule #2:** The monitor should be at least 18" from your eyes.

**Rule #3:** Keep your elbows at the sides of the body and at a right angle to the keyboard.

**Rule #4:** Keep your wrists in a straight or neutral position to avoid stressors on the carpal tunnel.

**Rule #5:** Avoid excessive force: do not grip the mouse too tightly or type in the same position for too long.

### LIFTING CORRECTLY

Whether lifting heavy objects, i.e., stacks of files or paper, is a part of your everyday tasks or a rare occurrence, it is important to follow proper lifting procedures to prevent injuries and serious pain.

# 99

Improper-Ergonomics  
injuries among Milwaukee  
County Employees  
2010 - 2014

It Costs Milwaukee County

## \$6,073

Per Improper Ergonomics-related Injury

## WORKPLACE ERGONOMICS, CONTINUED

First, when lifting, size up what is going to be lifted. If it is too awkward, too big or too heavy, do not hesitate to ask for help. Effective workers don't risk hurting themselves; they seek help when necessary.

Second, always lift with your legs and never with your back. Your legs are your biggest muscles and are designed to lift heavier objects. Use them to lift items off the ground instead of your back. Never bend at your waist when you are lifting heavier objects, because you will end up having low back pain, and that pain can indicate musculoskeletal disorders.

Third, avoid lifting and twisting all in the same motion. Your first goal is to get the object off the ground and then, once your legs are straight, you can move your legs instead of twisting your back.

### WAYS TO AVOID STRESS

Much has been said about re-designing work stations and taking action against musculoskeletal disorders, repetitive motion injuries and other ergonomic-related problems. One of the best ways to avoid pain is to recognize that muscles need periodic rest.

As you are working, take a break at regular intervals to allow muscles to rest, and stretch them thoroughly. If you are sitting, stand up and stretch. If you have been typing for a while, stop and stretch your hands and wrists. If you have been standing for long periods of time, sit down and stretch your back out. If you can, alter the work that you do and use different muscle groups, switch your work position after a period of time to give one set of muscle groups a rest while using others. Sometimes a little common sense can go a very long way in reducing painful situations.

### CLOSING THOUGHTS

When you have workstation design issues that need to be reviewed, bring this information to your supervisor's attention right away. Milwaukee County is very interested in making sure everyone is able to work without pain. If you have any questions regarding the way your work area is set up, please contact Susan Chase at [susan.chase@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:susan.chase@milwaukeecountywi.gov).

# ERGONOMICS: QUIZ

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ CLOCK #: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ DPT: \_\_\_\_\_

### Circle the Correct Answer

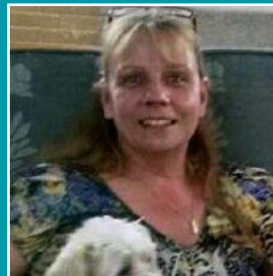
1. T F Stretching throughout the day reduces the occurrence of musculoskeletal injuries.
2. T F Your elbows should be at a 45 degree angle with your keyboard.
3. T F Always lift with your legs.
4. T F Take as few breaks as possible throughout the day to avoid muscle tightening.
5. T F Keep your screen slightly below eye level.

Please complete and detach this quiz to enter to win a prize. Winners are chosen at random from all submissions. Send responses to Courthouse - Risk Management (Rm. 302) or scan and send to [totalhealth@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:totalhealth@milwaukeecountywi.gov).

## CONGRATULATIONS TO LAST EDITIONS QUIZ DRAWING WINNERS!



**VICKI DANIELS**  
Register of Deeds  
Prize: Zoo Tickets



**WENDY WOODRUFF**  
Department of Aging  
Prize: Zoo Tickets



**SUSAN LANGER**  
Department of Child Support  
Prize: Zoo Tickets

## 6 WAYS TO MOVE MORE AT WORK

Too much sitting is bad for our health, but it also could be nearly impossible to avoid at work. Moving more can be done, regardless of your job, as long as you make the effort. Here are six ways to move more:

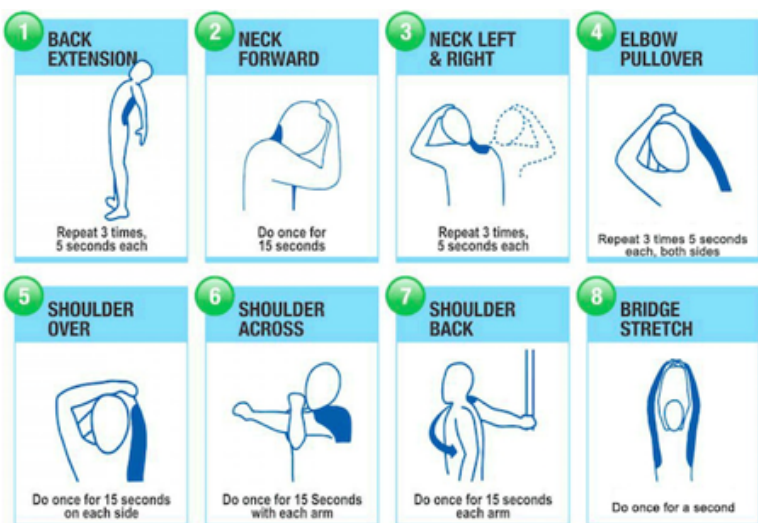
- 1 Set an alarm on your calendar to get up from your desk every hour. Stretch for a minute or two.
- 2 Use part of your lunch to take a brief walk outside or around the building.
- 3 Stand when taking a phone call.
- 4 Conduct meetings standing or walking.
- 5 Take the stairs at least one flight.
- 6 Instead of emailing or calling a coworker walk over and meet in person

## HEALTHY SNACKS FOR YOUR WORKSTATION

A healthy workstation is more than just proper ergonomics. It should be an area that can help you destress, makes you feel productive, and is free of food temptation from candy dishes or unhealthy snacks in desk drawers. It's common to be reaching for a snack throughout the workday. Often times when the urge to snack comes on it is tempting to go to the vending machine or cafeteria, but those choices can be impulsive and unhealthy. Planning ahead to have healthy snacks accessible will reduce the vending machine temptation and keep you energized throughout the day. Ideas for healthy snacks to bring or keep at work:

- » Almonds or other nuts
- » Peanut butter with celery
- » Greek yogurt
- » Oatmeal
- » Mini popcorn bags
- » Granola bars (KIND bars are the most nutritious)
- » String cheese
- » Fruit
- » Hummus with vegetables
- » Hard boiled eggs
- » Low sugar cereal (Cheerios, Kix, Kashi)
- » Cottage cheese
- » Roasted chickpeas (Biona brand)

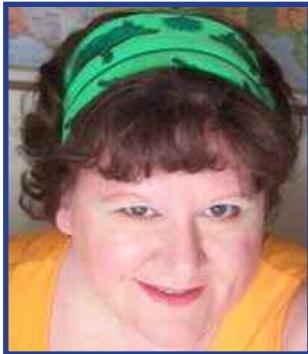
## ERGONOMIC-CONSCIOUS STRETCHES TO DO AT WORK







## 2015 – 4TH QUARTER WINNERS



### JUSTINE FILAPEK

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

#### THE FIND

Brick wall at JCC main entrance was in process of being repaired, which left exposed metal strips with sharp edges.

#### THE FIX

The strips of metal were rounded and angled downward.

#### SAFETY HAZARD / PROPERTY ISSUE PREVENTED

Potential for laceration to Milwaukee County staff members and general public.

#### PRIZE

Nite-Glow Golf Tickets

**SUPERVISOR:** Luciana Gonzalez

**PRIZE:** Zoo Tickets



### DAYTON DAVENPORT

PARKS DEPARTMENT

#### THE FIND

Unlocked and unsecured breaker plate on west side of Moody Park

#### THE FIX

A heavy-duty lock was placed on the plate cover

#### SAFETY HAZARD / PROPERTY ISSUE PREVENTED

Location is frequently visited by children and members of the general public. An unsecured breaker plate has the potential for electrocution and/or fire if tampered with by unauthorized personnel.

#### PRIZE

Zoo Tickets

**SUPERVISOR:** Gene Andrezejak

**PRIZE:** Golf Tickets



### TONY BURGER

AIRPORT

#### THE FIND

Signage in stairwell 12 was not visible from hallway.

#### THE FIX

Installed new signage and electrical box.

#### SAFETY HAZARD / PROPERTY ISSUE PREVENTED

Signage was replaced and adequately lit reducing the potential of slip, trip and falls.

#### PRIZE

Golf Tickets

**SUPERVISOR:** Keith Kent

**PRIZE:** Golf Tickets

The Find It - Fix It Program is a new safety and property incentive program that is currently available to all Milwaukee County employees. The program details can be found below. Additionally, a recorded presentation and entry cards can be found on the Milwaukee County Risk Management web page (<http://county.milwaukee.gov/Risk/FindItFixIt>). Disclaimer: Your personal welfare comes first! If you cannot safely and easily resolve the issue on your own, please DO NOT attempt to do so. When in doubt, always take the cautious approach and bring the issue to management's attention.